Panchayati Raj

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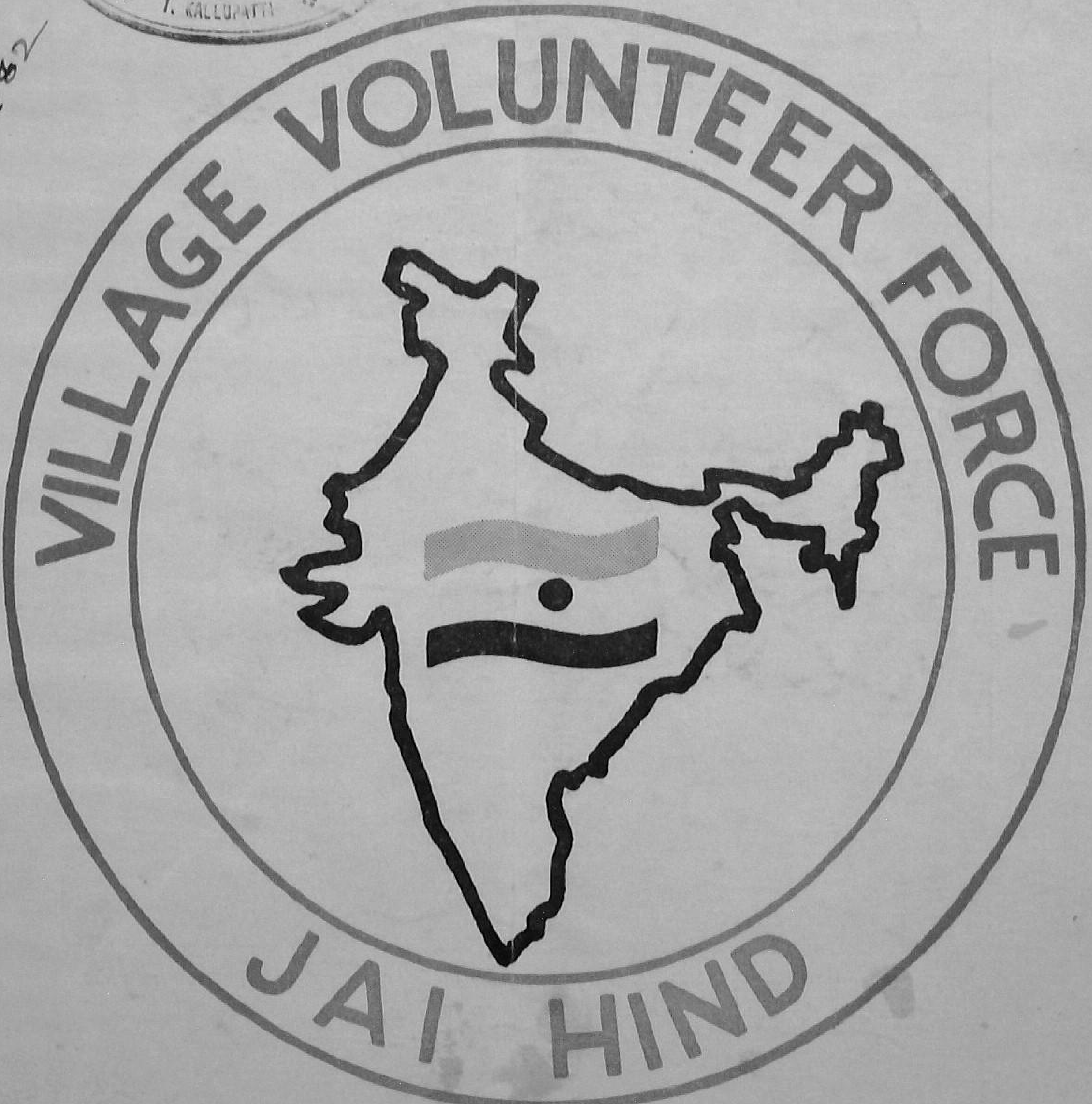

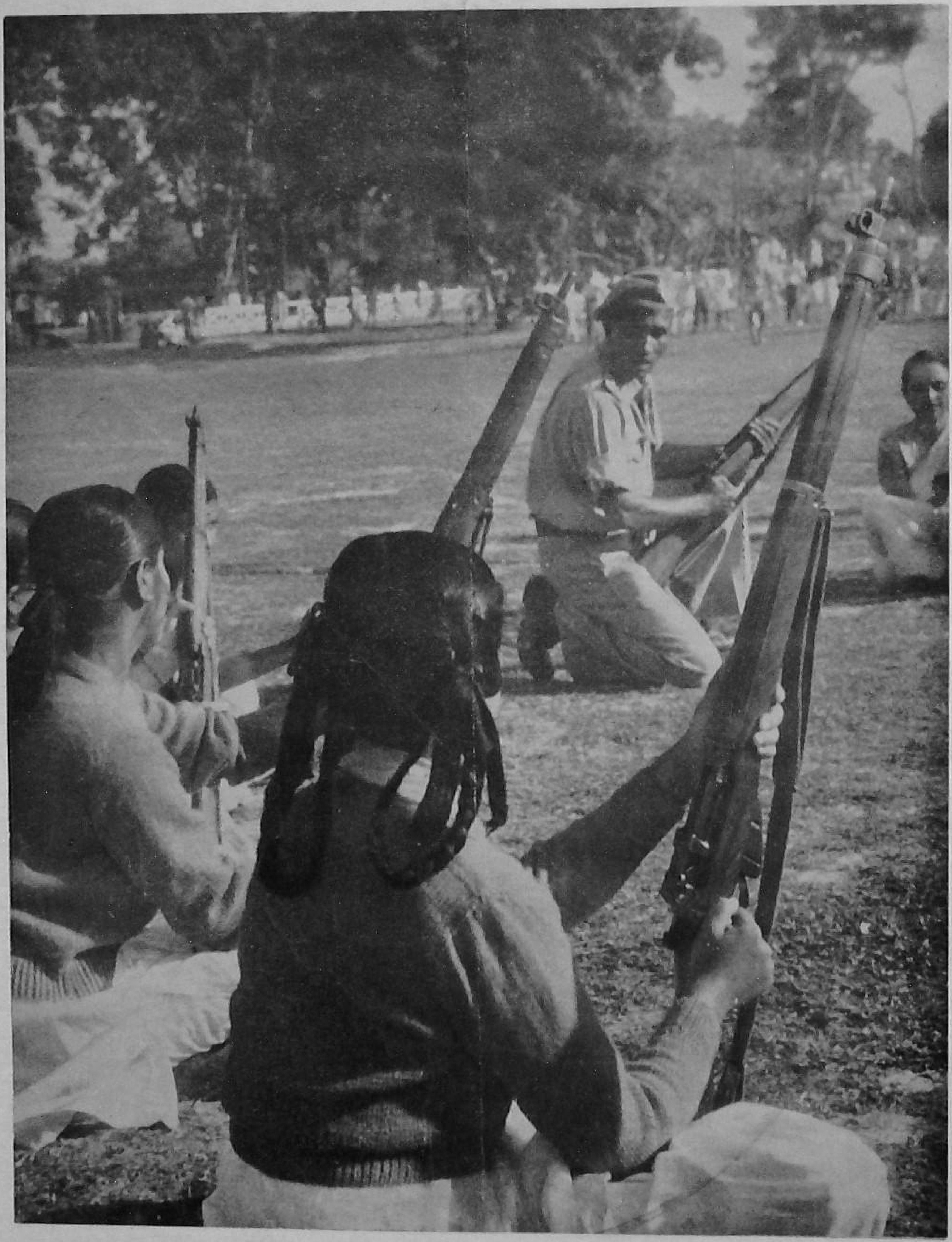

The women folk today are the equals of men in every walk of life. In times of national crisis like the present one, they are eager to handle even the rifle. In the picture above, the women of Tezpur are doing Rifle exercise.

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Editor : VISHNU DUTT
(Asstt. Editor, Publications Division)

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*SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

New Delhi,
December 31, 1962.

Dear Friend,

THE OLD YEAR is about to fade away. A few hours more and the new year will step in. I realise I am taking up the thread of our communications after an interval precisely of a year. I have missed during this eventful year the touch of you which I maintain through this tangible emblem of communion—I mean these letters. The last I wrote to you was on December 31, 1961. You will find this letter of interest in retrospect for there was clear anticipation therein of a radical change in our work and approach. I waited before this change became a reality, and am happy to be back to this communion at last. You have rights to expect something fundamental from us again and so would I of you in turn. Events have telescoped through the year. Things are moving faster even for the kaleidoscope. Two of the most ancient, populous and underdeveloped States in the world are poised against each other as if by the prompting of a cruel destiny. If the uneasy cease-fire of today were to turn into a shooting war again, the conflict will not remain confined to the two alone. The size of the two nations and their relative position today are bound to get the world involved as a whole. The consequences of such a conflagration are far too catastrophic to contemplate even as a possibility. How do we avert it?

THE TWO EXTREMES

If you look at the world dispassionately, you will see that freedom from the bare wants of life, let alone affluence, is confined even today in the year 1963, to rather a small section of mankind. It is not a question here of the East and West. Every land has its section of the "haves" and the "have-nots". The "have-nots" still constitute the major population of the world. There is no promise that these can secure their place under the sun in the foreseeable future, despite our growing victory over space, time and matter. Is it any wonder that in such a situation, prophets of two extremes,—feudal-cum-communal on the one and radical on the other—will promise short-cut remedies and find a ready following? We see a dawning sanity in the desire of the affluent nations to help others who are not so. The process however, must find equally its echo between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in the underdeveloped regions themselves. If this

*Minister's monthly letter addressed to the Development Commissioners.

does not happen, things are bound to explode sooner or later regardless of the help that may flow from without. Outlaws will always be there in the world as they are even in families. They are bound to threaten the harmony which the "few" prize for the security of their possessions, and the "many" accept out of fear. The new engagement up on the Himalayas, has to be looked at in this wider perspective. It will then be realised that the emergency is not going to be a short one. Indeed, it will threaten to be with us directly or indirectly almost as long as the world is unable to win security and freedom for the whole of mankind. The world has been in a state of emergency ever since the end of the Second World War despite the lofty war aims expounded by the Allies! The Second World War fought to end all wars ended only in a seeming cease-fire. The war on the new pattern has been raging hot and cold according to the situation round the world. That it has visited us at last is a reminder that we too are denizens of the "One World", that we also have our own contradictions which we must compose and reconcile, if we are to meet the crisis.

COMMUNITY STILL FAR OFF

Community Development, we said, is Samuhik Vikas. The process of development of course did start. The community, alas, is still far off. Political organisations in India as also the Government apparatus have been extraordinarily efficient in meeting the people with largesse from Government. But, as we know, this has served by and large to help those who stood least in need of help. We have found it difficult to enforce equity and justice in distribution of assistance from Government. No wonder Community Development as a movement has limped forward stultified and stunted. We must in this context be thankful to our friends from beyond the Himalayas! For, they will refuse to budge from their posture unless they can be made to respect us as a community. We wish to survive as a free nation with our own culture, traditions and institutions. Our adversary, the largest State in the world, has thrown on us a challenge based on a fanatic ideology of a totally different kind. A State such as this and one such as ours cannot be defeated militarily, one by the other, because of the very size and character of the countries. Defeat can be sustained or inflicted effectively only on the ideological front. Because of the significant difference in the size of the population between the two countries, a balance has to be sought somewhere else which can and must be only in quality. A community acting on its free will grows thus to be an inevitability.

THE ANSWER

The Village Volunteer Force programme has been designed to be the ideological answer we have been seeking. You have been charged to act the high priest with the best you can commandeer out of yourself. The programme calls for "something" from the people, "nothing" being given by Government this time except technical and administrative guidance. "To give something for nothing" is a concept fairly unknown to the Government and the political apparatus with which we function today in India. How do we then evoke the new response from the people? It is here that we have to study as to how we won our Independence from the most formidable colonial power ever known in history. We have to recall how we launched even the programme of Community Development mostly swimming upstream. We shall discover that, because "something" was given for "nothing" by a fair number, all these became a reality. The Village Volunteer Force will put Panchayati Raj and the Community Development oragnisation to the most exacting of tests ever faced by any agency. Happily, we have the services of a catalyst in this, the like of which we could never have engineered ourselves. It has obviously come as a challenge to enable us to rise or to sink in oblivion. The choice is here for the nation. I am attaching to this a small *brochure, the "Blood red pamphlet" we call it, on the new programme

(*Continued on Page* 20)

**Text is given in the next article.*

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN PEACE & IN CRISIS

S. K. Dey

INDIA HAS opted for the Socialist pattern of society. Democracy is to form the very core of the new philosophy. Socialism demands the strong and the weak in the family must pool their resources in common. The strong should pull the weak up. There should be a continuing pull upwards, a continuing move outwards for distribution of the stock in the family to the most outlying of members. The law of justice, equity and fair play should dominate the scene.

Cities and towns in India house the organised vocal section of the Indian community. Rural India stood on the periphery. She was there to subserve the middleman parasites rollicking in the cities. She offered second class citizenship at best to those who dwelt therein. The First Five Year Plan itself sought to correct this travesty. It brought in the concept of the National Extension Service as the agency and Community Development as the approach for the shift in focus. Starting from Bapu's birthday, October 1952, the Community Development Programme has been in operation. It has gone through many ups and downs. It has been subject to encomium and condemnation galore. The Agency still survives, so also the approach. Rural India which still houses more than 80 per cent of her children, has learnt that her condition also can change, indeed must change.

THE NATIONWIDE NETWORK

In ten years, the National Extension Service has been established over the sub-continent as a whole covering the 557,000 villages in the orbit of the programme in one stage or the other. This operates through 5,200 Blocks manned by extension staff from the village to the Block level. 202,000 Panchayats are already on the ground. There will be a few more marginal adjustments. Panchayati Raj is the new but universally accepted concept of democracy organically inter-woven from the grass-roots. This is already in operation in nine States out of fifteen. Three more States have enacted legislation. Under the impact of the new movement the remaining three States will also follow soon.

Sahakari Samaj is in the process of emergence, with 220,000 Village Co-operatives already in position. They are aimed to serve the whole of rural India in all basic needs of life. These institutions are beginning to be serviced from above by their own unions which have grown federally from the ground. The movement covers credit, marketing, processing, education, training and other allied matters. There are also functional co-operatives looking after artisans and others. These also are developing their own federal organisations. Gram Sahayak, the new functionary, came into being some time ago. This started with the progressive cultivators who were prepared to pool their experiences and to receive guidance on modern technology in agriculture from specialists provided by Government. They were to try new methods themselves and persuade others around, to emulate their examples. Four million of them have been registered and taken through camp seminars during the past five years. There are the Mahila Mandals and Yuvak Mandals. These also are spreading gradually in all parts of India providing organisational support for the mobilisation of women and youth around these nuclii.

COMMUNITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

There are differences which are of a fundamental character between the working of totalitarian and democratic societies. In a totalitarian society, individual is part of the mammoth State, and has no existence

apart from it. Willy-nilly, the individual grows to be a direct reflection of the State headed by a special elite. The Community Development Programme in India visualises a community of an opposite character. Individual grows here to be the focus of the community, the community being an integration of the individuals. When things are normal, when neither a festival nor a catastrophe dominates the scene, it is but natural that the community will be hardly seen to exist where instead the individuals will have the major play. One of the disabilities under which the Community Development Programmes has suffered till now, is that the Programme has functioned more as one for the development of the individuals. The catalyst for community making has not been easily obtaining.

CAPITAL OUT OF CRISIS

An ancient and the most regimented and populous State in the world threatens the frontiers of India today. We looked up to the Himalayas as the impregnable fortress wall, indeed the protective deity. The illusion has been shattered and we are face to face with a reality virtually without a precedent in our history. It is however well known that the strong and vital grow to their potential stature only when they work under the pressure of challenges. The weak alone look for cosy retreats sheltered from trials and tribulations. We claim a rich and ancient heritage in the art of living. We claim to be the inheritors of the legacy of Bapu. He could challenge the mightiest of the colonial powers in the world and make it bend down to the collective will of India symbolised by him. We have professed the dignity, invulnerability and immortality of the spirit of man through the ages. India has grown rich in body, mind and spirit because of the repeated onslaughts on her through the ages which she stood up to and assimilated. India has been known to be the master synthesiser, a living distillery of the essence of living. The challenge from the North is thus a challenge to the people of India to rise and stand the test or else go the way of ancient mammals in the course of evolution.

DEMOCRATIC MOBILISATION

Modern wars mean total mobilisation of resources, both men and material. If we are to fight a battle of survival, it cannot be on the basis of number pitched against number. For in that case, the very logic of the matching of number will drive this limited conflagration into an unlimited one. World war will follow as a sequal with nuclear annihilation of the human race as an inevitability. We would then be undoing ourselves and the cause of humanity we professed to serve and championed so ardently till now. The forces against which we stand pitched have been regimented from above. We cannot emulate this technique except at the peril of all we stand for. Yet those forces must be matched with our resources mobilised to their fullest potential. We must then find a democratic answer of our own to the problem of mobilisation such as can prove stronger both in spirit and content. This indeed is the crucial question of the hour.

DEFENCE LABOUR BANK

Gold is wealth both in peace and in crisis. The gold we have is very limited in quantity. Besides, however hard we may try, it would be impossible to unearth and commandeer all the gold hoarded or on the surface. Alternative resources in material which can be converted into ready cash are equally limited. The only commodities which seem to be in abundance are the labour of hands and the warmth of heart. Rural India today consists of nearly thirty-six crores of people. This means about twenty crores of able-bodied persons, both men and women. The proposal today is to establish a Bank in each village for national defence. Defence Labour Bank, we shall call it. It will call for no housing accommodation nor any armed sentry to guard it. It can take the form of a simple register maintained with the Panchayat. The register will record the name of the subscriber to the bank. The minimum subscription with which a member can be enrolled will be an undertaking for a minimum of twelve days of free labour a year. It will apply both to men and women. The landless and

the under-developed sections of the community must not be permitted to subscribe more than twelve days of free labour a year. Any excess should be paid for out of the common fund of the Panchayat. The elderly or the ailing members of the community may subscribe in cash in lieu of labour.

The deposits in the Defence Labour Bank can be utilised for works at the behest of the community. In the context of today the works should be readily remunerative. This can take the shape of ponds in the village for fishery, fruit and vegetable orchards, fuel forests owned by the Panchayat, brick or lime kilns or enterprises of similar nature which Panchayats can run as productive assets at the service of the community. Field channels have to be dug, small streams bunded for irrigation. These may not benefit the community as a whole. The beneficiaries may not have resources of their own. State Governments and also the Panchayats may not be able to provide enough cash to implement these schemes and enforce these obligations. The labour deposited in the Defence Labour Bank can however be mobilised fully for all such purposes. The cost of such labour will come back from the beneficiaries either in ready cash or on deferred terms as an asset to the Village Panchayat. Such assets can serve either as revolving capital for the future or as a direct contribution to National Defence Fund or as both. Fully mobilised, such a programme can yield a minimum dividend of nearly 240 crores of labour days worth more than Rs. 300 crores a year, which can be used to the best advantage of the community at their behest.

VILLAGE VOLUNTEER FORCE

A totalitarian party machine percolates into every fibre in the life of the community and of individuals. A Force regimented by such a State, can be matched by a smaller force only if it grows naturally and spontaneously through people's own volition. Village Volunteer Force comes in as the logical answer. Every Village Panchayat can contribute a Village Volunteer Force. The ultimate target of this can be to enrol all able-bodied persons, both men and women. It can have a three-fold programme: production, mass education and village defence. A strong agricultural base is the first requisite of National Defence. A nation-wide movement to intensify the drive for agricultural production through village production plans in every village to enable millions of our peasants to participate fully in the Defence Effort can form the core of the programme. There can be a task force on production which will concentrate on production and building up of local community assets like development of Panchayat lands, compost, vegetables and fruit cultivation, fuel plantation, pisciculture, village tanks and other rural works, dry farming, soil conservation, minor irrigation, field channels and other special programmes for increased agricultural production. An essential part of the programme will be the planned utilisation of the labour pool in the "Defence Labour Bank", described earlier.

The programme of Mass Education can be concerned mainly with the dissemination of correct information through various media, effective use of publicity material, prevention of the spread of rumours and the maintenance of morale. Under Village Defence, the volunteers can look after watch and ward duties, fire prevention, first-aid, safeguarding of lines of communications, etc. The Youth Club and Mahila Mandal can form an integral part of the Village Volunteer Force. The Village Volunteer Force can have a Women's Wing formed round the Mahila Mandals which will be promoted in every village for looking after the special activities of women, such as promotion of savings, knitting, assistance to the service co-operatives and fair price shops in the distribution of consumer articles, etc. and the welfare of the families of Jawans. While the elders can offer mature guidance, youth alone can impart dynamics and women the sustenance to a live people's movement. The Village Volunteer Force can have a common programme for all its members relating to physical training, drill, etc. This will generate in the rural masses a sense of discipline and of participation in the defence effort.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION

When muscles do not act, they begin to atrophy. The process spreads till the organism as a whole is overpowered. A community when not challenged from without begins to get flabby and to be a house divided against itself. The alien challenge was removed from the scene of India on August 15, 1947. The challenge of rehabilitation which followed in the wake lasted but a shortwhile. Ten million got rehabilitated through the joint effort of the people and the government. Five Year Plans began to yield dividends. They held out promises of security for the future. No wonder, true to one part of our old tradition, we started on the road back to disintegration. With the giant State from across the Himalayas threatening the very freedom of life we prize in India, a new situation, however has arisen. All political parties in the country today as will be seen, are one. All castes, creeds and religions are one. A nation is at work for the first time after centuries; indeed, a joint family is in operation. This must endure. The community must be mobilised both in its material and human faculties to the highest of its potentiality. The emergency can and must be utilised to promote new outlook and foster new habits of thoughts, action and association. A nation gifted with the faculties for survival can and does face an emergency with an approach totally different from one of weaklings. Such a nation can help the emergency, also be helped in the process. This cannot however happen unless the strong and the weak members of the family can be inspired to rise to the same level of understanding and effort.

THE BATTLE BYPASSED

Freedom does not descend on a people. Independence may, because of extraneous factors. It is the divine law that people themselves have to walk up the stairs into the temple of freedom. The village people are yet to fight the battle for their liberation with understanding and full acceptance of the implications of the struggle bypassed. They have been given through the N.E.S. and the Community Development movement a frame-work of essential services by Government. Legislation enacted, has provided an organisation for the democratic representation of the people. Freedom has to be earned by the rural areas, apart from their contribution to national defence in the context of today. It is obvious, each individual citizen in rural India will have to make his or her individual pilgrimage. March forward to "Destination Man" will be determined by the intensity of the effort, the purity of spirit that characterises the individual pilgrimage and by the leadership that the representatives of the communtiy offer to the collectivity of pilgrims.

HOME IS IN THE MAKING

We have realised the type of world we live in and the gaps there are in our defences in such a world. We have learnt through the Community Development Programmes the gaps in our administration, our technical resources, our supplies. We have yet to realise the gaps and fissures in the system of democracy under which we work and which we must needs correct before it is too late, if the democracy we prize is to survive, endure and flourish. National defence of India will be effective only when we learn to put up defences not merely against aggression from without but also from the aggression that has till now corroded us from within. Attention to the disabled and neglected sections of the community thus grows to be a matter of supreme priority.

Community Development Programme promises to reach its consummation today. For we have at least the spectacle and the phenomenon of community in action against a formidable peril. We come to the people this time no longer with sanctions based on offers and bounties from government. We come instead with a call for blood, sweat and tears. For these alone constitute the eternal wherewithal for all pilgrimage. These calls can and will be responded to only when the callers themselves have set the example by the purity of their conduct, sincerity of their approach and by the dynamism of their own actions. It will thus offer to the leaders and the led alike the

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THE CO-OPERATIVE AND THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY

V. T. KRISHNAMACHARI

THE NATION is facing today a situation of extreme gravity, arising from China's invasion of our motherland,—an invasion for which China has been making secret preparations for quite a long time.

This open and unabashed aggression is being resisted by our defence forces in extremely difficult conditions. They are fighting back with great endurance, courage and determination.

There is no doubt that everyone in the country is fully prepared to make all the sacrifices that will be needed. We are fighting for the integrity of our country and for the moral and spiritual values which we have cherished for many centuries.

Co-operators are of course ready to share fully in all these sacrifices and burdens and to play their part in the activities of citizens' councils and other organisations that are being set up all over the country. They have in addition, special responsibilities as co-operators. There are several directions in which the co-operators can make sustained efforts to serve the country.

PRODUCTION PLANS

The cardinal importance of increasing production to the maximum extent possible in all sectors of the economy needs no stressing. The war has to be won in farms and factories. Inevitably, agricultural production comes first. Its primary importance is obvious.

In this great task, the co-operative organisation has a vital role. The Panchayat institutions and co-operative institutions have the joint responsibility for working to achieve this objective. It is the duty of the district, block and village panchayats, acting along with co-operatives at the district, block and village levels, to prepare district, block and village production plans in accordance with the general directions of the State Government and carry them out.

The village production plan comes first. This should be prepared by the village panchayat and village multipurpose co-operative society with the help of the block panchayat and with consent of the entire village community. As part of this production plan, the village community should accept the obligation to utilise fully the facilities for scientific agriculture which are made available by the State organisations and the higher panchayat and co-operative bodies.

IRRIGATION FACILITIES

Taking the country as a whole, the utilisation of irrigation facilities cannot be said to be satisfactory. Water is now available for nearly 6 million acres which is not used. The main reason for this is that the field channels needed for utilisation are not excavated in time *i.e.*, before supplies of water became available or immediately thereafter. A rough estimate is that about 100 thousand miles of such channels now remain to be dug by the people whose lands are to benefit from irrigation. The district and block panchayats and co-operatives should take special interest in this and assist village panchayats and co-operatives in seeing that all channels are dug in time for the next cultivation season. We must regard this as a sacred duty in this great emergency.

There are also other programmes to be carried out. Villages should arrange for the

multiplication of improved seeds supplied to them by the block for their use. Similarly, organic and green manures should be produced in every village and used along with the fertilizers that may be available. Then there are soil conservation and dry-farming programmes, including afforestation, for which there are liberal allocations in our Plans. These programmes should also be carried out preferably through special co-operatives. In these ways panchayats and co-operatives can ensure that production is increased year after year, according to crop patterns settled in consultation with the technical staffs.

I know that our agriculturists would be ready and willing to carry out these duties, if co-operatives and panchayats assist them. Such assistance should be given to them promptly and at the right time.

PROMOTION OF SAVINGS

Co-operatives at all levels should also work for promoting savings—securing deposits from members and non-members. The aim is that, in the shortest possible time, the movement should get all the resources it needs, from such deposits. The societies should also work to support the defence bonds schemes recently announced. This applies to all societies—rural and urban and to apex and central banks. It is essential that every family should invest in defence bonds, however small the amount may be. By doing this every citizen accepts his share of the common burden and gives evidence of national solidarity in this grave emergency.

CONSUMER CO-OPERATIVES

It has been decided that there should be a large programme for consumer co-operatives in towns and cities for maintaining reasonable price levels for essential commodities. These have to be started as rapidly as possible. All experienced co-operators should place their services freely at the disposal of the State Governments for promoting this movement. The National Co-operative Union has offered its assistance for organising training programmes, with the help of its member organisations, for the different classes of personnel required for starting and running these societies.

QUALITY OF THE MOVEMENT

With the large expansion of the co-operative movement that we have before us, a strong public opinion should be created within the movement itself for maintaining high standards of efficiency and integrity and for preventing losses due to negligence and mismanagement. In this all co-operative organisations and members have a vital role.

UNITED IN RESOLVE

The co-operative movement is in a special position to undertake these obligations. It has organisations covering the urban and rural areas in the country. There are societies practically in every town and city: these have over 5 million members. There are also more than 210,000 primary rural societies with over 18 million members. Through this network we are in a position to influence practically every family in India.

We should also bring into the movement in every block area many educated young men and women who would be prepared to devote a definite part of their time to working in it. They should be trained to assist in the education of members in their responsibilities and also in the management of societies. In about ten years societies of all kinds will have 110 to 120 million members and we shall need many thousands of dedicated workers to assist them.

The co-operators must show, by sustained action from day to day, that all of us are united and share **"in the firm resolve of the Indian people"** as declared in Parliament **"to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India, however long and hard the struggle may be".**

NEW FERMENT IN LADAKH HAMLETS

THE QUIET AIR of tiny hamlets in the snowbound Ladakh is today reverberating with a new slogan: "Death to the Demon of Aggression." As the young men leave for the distant Recuiting Centres to enlist in the Army to fight the Chinese aggressor, proud old parents shower their cheerful blessings, resolute young wives bid a smiling farewell, and the whole village raises the full-throated cry: "LAR GAYLO"—"Death to the Demon of Aggression."

NEW FERMENT

Every village and town in the border district of Ladakh is engaged in mobilising all available resources for the defence of the Himalayas. Families are vying with each other in offering the largest number of recruits for the Army. When the Minister for Ladakh Affairs, Shri Kushak Bakula, called on an old mother who had lost her only son in an action against the enemy, she lamented that she had no other son or grandson to send to the front! Those who were wont to count the beads are now seen taking up rifles in their hands for according to them, it is not the time for prayers but for action against the enemy. In the sparsely populated Leh Tehsil alone, over hundreds of youths have volunteered for the Army and unprecedented enthusiasm has spread to the far-flung areas also.

Women in Ladakh are coming forward to learn First Aid and Home Nursing.

A group of Ladakhi housewives knitting woollen garments for the Jawans.

At a public meeting, the inhabitants of the remote Nubra Valley, in Ladakh, took

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MOBILISING RURAL INDIA

(By our Special Correspondent)

A meeting of the Ministers and Development Commissioners of the Northern Zone States called in New Delhi to discuss the scheme of Village Volunteer Force.

DECEMBER 16, 1962 *TO JANUARY* 26, 1963—these forty days will go down in the history of India as perhaps the most intense and hectic period when 360 million people living in the villages of India were geared up through a democratic process to a common thought and united action in so far as the present national emergency is concerned. On the Republic Day this year, will each of the two lakh three thousand Gaon Sabhas with millions of members of the Village Volunteer Force wearing a common badge, pledge itself to "the mobilisation of all its resources, both human and material, as its contribution to the national effort."

HERCULEAN TASK

This herculean task has been made possible because of the well-established network of the N.E.S. agency and the three-tier Panchayati Raj bodies as well as due to the dynamic role played by those at the helm of affairs at the Centre as well as the States. The Union Minister, Shri S. K. Dey, had rightly anticipated the gigantic and complicated nature of the effort involved when addressing the first regional conference of the State Ministers and Development Commissioners of the Northern Zone called in New Delhi to discuss the scheme of Village Volunteer Force, had remarked, "The Chinese invasion on our Northern borders is more than a mere threat to a few thousand square miles of the bleak and barren mountains. It is a challenge to democracy, the Panchayati Raj pattern we are building up and the way of life they represent, that is freedom and dignity of the individual. If we are to meet the Chinese challenge effectively, we must prove that our way of life is superior to theirs as reflected in the regimentation of the social life in which the individual is a mere cog in the State machinery." As if to vindicate the democratic system and to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Panchayati Raj pattern in delivering the goods even in times of national crisis, the entire machinery from the levels of the Central and State Governments down to the Village Panchayats and Gaon Sabhas was geared up to function in such perfect unision, and involving the least possible delay as have seldom been witnessed before. Under a regimented system of society in a totali-

tarian State like the one existing in China, things are easy because orders are simply to be passed somewhere at the top and there is no other choice for the others but to carry them out down to the lowest level. Not so in a democracy where everyone enjoys full freedom of expression of opinion and decisions are taken after a good deal of collective thinking and discussion. The democratic process is a process of educating and converting the opponent to your views.

BEST METHOD

After some hard thinking, the Union Ministry of Community Development, Panchayati Raj and Co-operation had come to the conclusion that the best method of mobilising the available resources in men and material in the villages to meet the National Emergency lay through the raising of a Village Volunteer Force, charged with the triple objective of mass education, production and civil defence. This would provide a forum to every villager to contribute his mite to the national effort. The idea of Labour Defence Bank in which every able-bodied man would offer free labour for 12 days in a year was also evolved as an integral part of the scheme.

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

It was decided that the scheme would be formally launched by the Prime Minister on the Republic Day when the Gaon Sabhas would take a prescribed pledge and ensure that the Village Volunteer Force and the Labour Defence Bank started functioning. During the short intervening period a number of steps had to be taken at various levels to make democracy work. First and foremost, all the States had to be apprised of the scheme and their views obtained before its final adoption by them. A number of details such as the pledge to be taken, and the badge to be worn by the members of the Village Volunteer Force had to be decided upon. A schedule of meetings to be held and actions to be taken by the Panchayati Raj bodies at various levels was also drawn up. The Panchayats had to meet and decide upon the various items of the programme of common works to be undertaken by the Village Volunteer Force. It was only after all these preliminaries had been completed that the scheme was to be launched with the simultaneous taking of the pledge by the Gaon Sabhas all over the country.

It was not an easy task to get the scheme in all its essentials adopted by the various States. Discussion and persuasion in a spirit of mutual understanding which are the wages of democracy had to be paid in full measure. The time-limit being very short, it was planned to have three separate Regional Conferences rather than a single big conference for the purpose.

THREE CONFERENCES

The first Conference attended by the Ministers and Development Commissioners of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir and representatives of the Administrations of Himachal Pradesh and Delhi was convened in New Delhi on 16th December, 1962. Shri S. K. Dey, Minister for Community Development, Panchayati Raj and Co-operation, addressing the meeting said, "War brings out both the sublimest as well as the basest in human nature and both forces have been unleashed by the present emergency. The village Volunteer Force which seeks the nation-wide mobilisation of manpower and resources to meet the crisis may similarly expose the gaps and fissures in our democracy, but this again would prove to be a unique opportunity for the nation to test itself and prove its strength." He further pointed out how the present emergency gave India a unique opportunity to establish the superiority of her political, social and moral ideology, to that of the totalitarian system. The Village Volunteer Force Scheme was based on the free volition of every individual belonging to the vast rural communities of India and will mobilise the country-wide upsurge of enthusiasm. This was followed by each State Minister giving a review of the unprecedented enthusiasm and unity of purpose that had gripped the masses in their respective States in the wake of the Chinese aggression of our

country. All were agreed upon the necessity of canalising the enthusiasm and resources of the people through the scheme of the Village Volunteer Force and the Labour Defence Bank. However, there was some difference of opinion as to which of the two objectives of the scheme *i.e*,, Production or Civil Defence should take precedence. Whereas States like Punjab and Rajasthan which have already got some martial traditions were in favour of increased food production getting priority over the Civil Defence aspect, the States of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat felt that in order to exploit the popular enthusiasm it was necessary to lay emphasis on the Civil Defence aspect,—the question of increasing production being tagged on to it later. After some discussion, it was agreed by everyone that the defence aspect was no doubt of primary importance at the moment but then production was a vital part of it and could not be considered separately. Therefore, both the issues are to be taken up simultaneously.

Another issue which involved some clarification was the doubt expressed by some about the feasibility of jobs being undertaken on private fields by the Task Force. It was explained that though priority was to be given to community works, there was no bar for agricultural operations calculated to increase production to be undertaken on fields belonging to private individuals since the Panchayat would charge for all such private jobs at the prevalent wage rates. The income thus drived would form a part of the Revolving Fund of the Labour Defence Bank.

In view of the importance of the Village Volunteer Force scheme, the Emergency Committee of the Cabinet with the addition of the Minister for Food and Agriculture and the Minister for Community Development, Panchayati Raj and Co-operation, will be in charge of it at the Centre. It was felt that the Chief Ministers in the States should also set up Committees on the analogy of the Centre. It was also felt that MPs, MLAs, and MLCs should be actively associated with the implementation of this programme. Shri N. M. Tidke, Deputy Minister, Maharashtra, promised that as they were not members of the Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads in his State, they would be given special facilities for making their contribution to the programme. The special committees to be set up by the Zila Parishads would include representatives of voluntary organisations and formulate a coherent programme of work for the Block as a whole.

The Second Conference attended by the Ministers and Development Commissioners of the Eastern Zone States of Assam, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal and representatives of Tripura Administration, was held in Calcutta on 18th December. The Third Conference of the Southern States attended by Ministers and Development Commissioners of Madras, Mysore, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala and the Chief Commissioner of Pondicherry was held in Madras on 20th December. At both the meetings the implications of the proposed scheme of Village Volunteer Force and the Labour Defence Bank were made clear and the State Ministers agreed to implement the same after effecting necessary adjustments suited to their local conditions.

A series of discussions about the scheme have been held at the District, Block and Village levels, so that the whole of rural India is tuned up to the present Emergency and is ready to play its destined role after pledging itself formally on the Republic Day.

●

SOLDIERS ON THE HOME-FRONT

A GOLD HANSLI AND A SON FOR DEFENCE EFFORTS.

Shrimati Shimla Dadi of Sehad village in Buhana Panchayat Samiti of Rajasthan has donated a gold hansli (rounded rod used as a neck ornament) weighing 11 tolas and has offered her son for military recruitment.

* * *

A WHOLE FAMILY IN THE SERVICE OF MOTHERLAND

Mother of Shri Jai Dayal Sahad a Sarpanch of Panchayat Samiti, Buhana (Jhunjhunu) has donated a necklace (Hansli) weighing 11.5 tolas to the Defence Fund and has also offered the services of her grandson for National Defence. Father of Shri Sahad has contributed Rs. 51.

* * *

MISS A MEAL TO HELP THE NATIONAL DEFENCE FUND

Shri Banwari Lal Dixit, senior clerk of the Panchayat Samiti of Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan has taken a vow to take meals only once a day and to deposit the saving of about Rs. 10 thus effected to the Fund.

* * *

ENTIRE HONORARIUM DONATED

Thakur Dalapat Singh, Pradhan, Panchayat Samiti Raipur in Rajasthan, has donated his entire honorarium till the present emergency is over.

* * *

A GRAM SEVIKA OFFERS DONATION

Krishan Prabha, Gram Savika, of village Alanpur (Sawai Madhopur) has decided to give Rs. 4 every month to the Defence Fund.

* * *

A GRAM SEVAK TO CONTRIBUTE Rs. 5 PER MONTH

Shri Bhawani Shanker Sharma, Gram Sevak in village Khilchipur in Rajasthan has decided to contribute Rs. 51 per month.

* * *

BLOCK SAMITI EMPLOYEES DONATE THEIR PAY

Block Development Officer of Rampur Naikin Block in Madhya Pradesh has donated three days' pay while peons of the Block have given two days' pay and other employees one day's pay to the Defence Fund.

* * *

A GRAM SEVAK'S GESTURE

A notable contribution has been received from Shri M.R. Wamankar, a village level worker of Neempani in the Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. He has donated all the prize money amounting to Rs. 250 for the National Defence Fund. Shri Wamankar was awarded this prize for being adjudged the best Village Level Worker in the Betul district for the year 1961-62.

* * *

GRAM SEVAKS DONATE SALARIES

A Gram Sevak of Jaora Block in Madhya Pradesh, Shri Ramesh Chand Tyagi has decided to donate five per cent of his salary every month. Shri Ramkumar Rishishwar, Gram Sevak of Jaora Block donated 10 per cent of his salary for the National Defence Fund.

* * *

PANCHAYAT SAMITI EMPLOYEES DO THEIR BEST

Shri Damodar Lal, a lower division clerk of Sikari Panchayat Samiti in Jaipur district has offered to pay 20 per cent of his salary and Shri Navinchandra Assistant Inspector of Co-operatives, Rs. 15 per month till the Chinese aggression is over.

* * *

THE DUMB ALSO CONTRIBUTE

Shri Chandrashekhar—a dumb and deaf resident of Chanerao village in Desuri Panchayat Samiti in Rajasthan has donated Rs. 10 for the Defence Fund. Incapable of speech and hearing, he has, nevertheless, expressed his keen desire to fight at the Front for the sake of the country.

* * *

SON OFFERED FOR THE BATTLE FRONT

Chaudhary Dhana Ram, a public worker of Bhadra in Rajasthan has offered the services of his 24 year old son to fight the Chinese aggressors without drawing any salary or emoluments. He has also announced to donate 1/10th of his income accruing from his agricultural farm.

* * *

From the Chowpal

(Scene: the village chowpal. A group of about 20 villagers is participating in a Radio Forum discussion on the Scheme of the Village Volunteer Force.)

RAM SINGH : Sarpanchji, we have just heard on the Radio that Village Volunteer Force is being raised in every village and that Prime Minister, Shri Nehru is inaugurating the scheme on the auspicious Republic Day. Are we also raising this Force in our village ?

SARPANCH : Oh, yes! The Panchayat has already decided it. The Gaon Sabha is meeting to-night to take a formal decision on the matter.

RAM SINGH : But is it really necessary to have the Village Volunteer Force now that the Chinese have cried halt to their aggression and are returning ?

SARPANCH : Who can say what the real intentions of the Chinese are ? After their treacherous attack on our country, we can never trust them. This may be another ruse to attack us at some later date. Even if they are sincere in their professions, we cannot afford to take any more chances. We were caught unprepared at the time of their last attack. We have now to prepare ourselves fully, in the military sense as well as from the point of view of production. It is precisely with that aim in view that the Village Volunteer Force is being raised.

RAM SINGH : But can we ride the two horses at the same time ? Will not this new emphasis on defence come in conflict with our development efforts ?

SARPANCH : To some extent, that is true. But what can be done ? There is no other alternative. Freedom is a priceless thing. It has to be preserved at all costs. Much as we would have liked to concentrate all our efforts on development, as we had been doing all along till now, circumstances have forced us to strengthen our defence forces primarily.

GRAM SAHAYAK : But Sarpanchji, I cannot understand why our production need go down in the process ? On the other hand, it should go up for is not increased agricultural production itself an essential part of our defence efforts ?

SARPANCH : That is true. The more we produce the better for our defence efforts. In fact the present emergency should act as a spur to increased agricultural production.

RAM SINGH : But tell me, how the Village Volunteer Force will now help us to achieve this objective ?

SARPANCH : The idea is to provide a nucleus to a large number of workers in the village who desire to contribute some defence efforts. Those who are interested in increasing agricultural production may constitute the "Task Force for Production". Those who are young and active and have an aptitude for discipline and military training may constitute the 'Task Force for Civil Defence'. And lastly, those who take interest in explaining things to others and are good educators may join the third "Task Force for mass education". The three Task Forces will constitute the Village Volunteer Force.

RAM SINGH : But in the past, did we not have the Gram Sahayaks and agricultural sub-committees for looking after agricultural production ? Will they become redundant now ?

SARPANCH : They would still continue working. The role of the Task Force for production will be different from theirs. It will relate largely to the mobilisation of all the farmer families in the village and to pilot the working teams of villagers who have volunteered their shramdan in the Defence Labour Bank. It is obvious that the formulation of the Village Production Plan and the location of sites of work such as the digging of field channels, or reclamation of waste lands, contour-bunding etc. will be done by the agricultural sub-committee, whereas the Village Volunteer Force will only provide the actual task force for carrying out the work.

GRAM SAHAYAK : In the past, several projects like digging of field channels, contour-bunding, afforestation which could not be taken in hand for one reason or the other had resulted in a considerable set-back to agricultural production. With the Task Force being readily available, it will be possible to complete many of such labour-intensive projects. We may not be able to contribute money but we can certainly offer labour.

SARPANCH : Tell me, is it difficult for us to contribute even 12 days' labour in a year?

RAM SINGH : No; it is not difficult. But I doubt if everyone will come forward to donate his labour voluntarily. We should make it compulsory.

SARPANCH : That will be a counsel of despair. I think in the present context of the emergency in the country, everybody would like to do his bit to promote the defence effort. Compulsion or regimentation from above will be the negation of democracy,—the way of life for which we stand. Do you mean to say that our Panchayati Raj system is valid only for peace and not for war ?

RAM SINGH : No.

SARPANCH : If we have to meet the challenge posed by the Chinese we have to do so at all planes—militarily, politically and economically. We must prove upto the hilt that our democratic system based on the freedom and dignity of the individual is far superior to their conception of regimentation and forced labour.

RAM SINGH : That is true. You have explained at length about the Task Force for production. What will the Task Force for Civil Defence do ?

SARPANCH : We are essentially a peace-loving people. However, the initial reverses suffered by us during the Chinese aggression on our borders have brought home the truth to us that to safeguard our freedom, we will have to keep our defence forces well-equipped and to take necessary Civil Defence measures. The object of having a Task Force for Civil Defence in every village is to keep up the martial spirit and to provide a reservoir for providing Jawans for the army. The members of the Task force will also look after the watch and ward of the village. They will be given training in Parade, Rifle-shooting, First-Aid, Fire-Fighting and A.R.P.

RAM SINGH : And what about the third Task Force you referred to?

SARPANCH : The third Task Force will consist of educated people who can disseminate correct information to the people and help in countering effectively rumours so as to keep up their morale. Increasing use of the Radio Forum as we are doing now, has to be made to achieve this. The school teacher and the Youth Club will play a prominent role in this.

LAXMI BAI : What about the womenfolk ? Can't they play any role in the programme?

SARPANCH : They have a very important part to play. The Village Volunteer Force will have a women's wing which will endeavour to mobilise all village women to help promote the Defence Efforts. They will help in knitting woollens for the Jawans, in looking after the families of the Jawans on active service and in effecting alround economy at home so as to step up savings for being invested in Defence Savings Certificates and Bonds. They can be of considerable help in running the Consumer Co-operative Stores and in keeping down prices of essential commodities.

Village Volunteer Force

M. M. K.

INDIA, it is said, lives in her villages. This is more than a mere statement of her overwhelmingly rural population, for ours is a civilisation basically rural in character—marked by simplicity, open heartedness and lack of sophistication. The stylised urbanity and "culture" associated with the courts of Moghul Kings and Nawabs did not extend beyond the small orbit of the court nobility and their dependants. Measured also in more matter-of-fact terms, village has the pride of place in the national scene. A major part of our export trade is accounted for by agricultural commodities. Half of our national income is contributed by agriculture. Our army draws the bulk of its men from the villages. In village, thus, lies the potential of India's strength both military and economic. Today, as the peace and freedom of the Nation are threatened by external aggression it is again the village which will have to play a major role in building up the base of national resistance. The plough in the field will be an equally potent weapon as the gun on the battle front. Agricultural production has thus to be increased, not only from the national point of view of wiping off our food deficits and stopping the drain on foreign exchange, but also because it will bring in more income to the farmer, enlarge the national wealth and by increasing his savings add to his staying power.

MAIN ENERGISER

The Village Volunteer Force, through its Production Task Force, has been conceived in this context as the main energiser of the rural masses. On it will devolve special responsibility for the realisation of targets of increased agricultural production. The targets of production and of the various media through which increased production can be achieved, e.g., compost, irrigation, improved seeds etc. will have been laid down in the Village Production Plan. The Task Force will have to work for the realisation of the tasks set in the village Plan. One might ask that agriculture being generally a matter of individual operations, how can a Task Force be of any effect there. Answer to this lies in a proper understanding of its manner of operation particularly by its members, Dalpati and Updalpati and the Panchayat. This force is intended not merely to be the motive force of the tasks requiring collective or group action but has also to make itself responsible for activising individual effort.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Planned and fruitful utilisation of the contributions received in the "Defence Labour Bank" is an important function of this Task Force. Much larger response will be available from the people if the works undertaken with Defence Labour Bank contributions are for the creation or augmentation of community assets. These assets, of necessity, have to be productive in character in view of the needs of the present situation. A selective programme should be undertaken, suiting local conditions and requirements. First place should be given to construction and repair of irrigation tanks, planting of quick-growing fuel and fodder trees and digging of compost pits on the village common land, soil conservation measures, renovation of tanks for fish-culture, improvement of pastures. These will not only add to production but shall also bring in income to the Panchayats. Panchayat compost pits will particularly help smaller cultivators who may not be in a position to spare land for pits on their own small holdings. These pits can be leased out to such cultivators on a small rental and it will be for them to produce their own compost in them.

Labour contributions to the Defence Labour Bank are unlikely to become available on any defined or regular pattern of one day in each month. Most people would like

& Agricultural Production

WALI

to give their total twelve days' contribution in a year in just four or five or even fewer instalments during their periods of comparative leisure. This is in a way even to be welcomed because works can thus be speedily completed. Even so, careful planning will be required in the marshalling of labour. There would, moreover, be certain works which would require sustained attention even after the main manual labour portion is over. For instance, plantation of fuel trees will involve not only digging of pits for plantation and putting up some sort of fencing either with stones or thorns or by way of a protective ditch, but shall also require regular watering and care. It would be better in such cases to make the Youth Club or Mahila Mandal depending on the type of the project, responsible for the after-care. The system of accounting of the Labour Bank should be kept as simple as possible, *i.e.* in terms of whole days.

It will also be useful to divide the Task Force into as many squadrons as the number of works selected for execution. Each squadron should have a squadron-leader, preferably chosen by consensus. It will be the duty of the squadron under its leader to muster individuals whose labour has been earmarked against that work and ensure efficient execution of it. This is not to say that the squadron-leaders or other members of the Task Force will merely work as supervisors. They shall also equally participate in the work with their own labour.

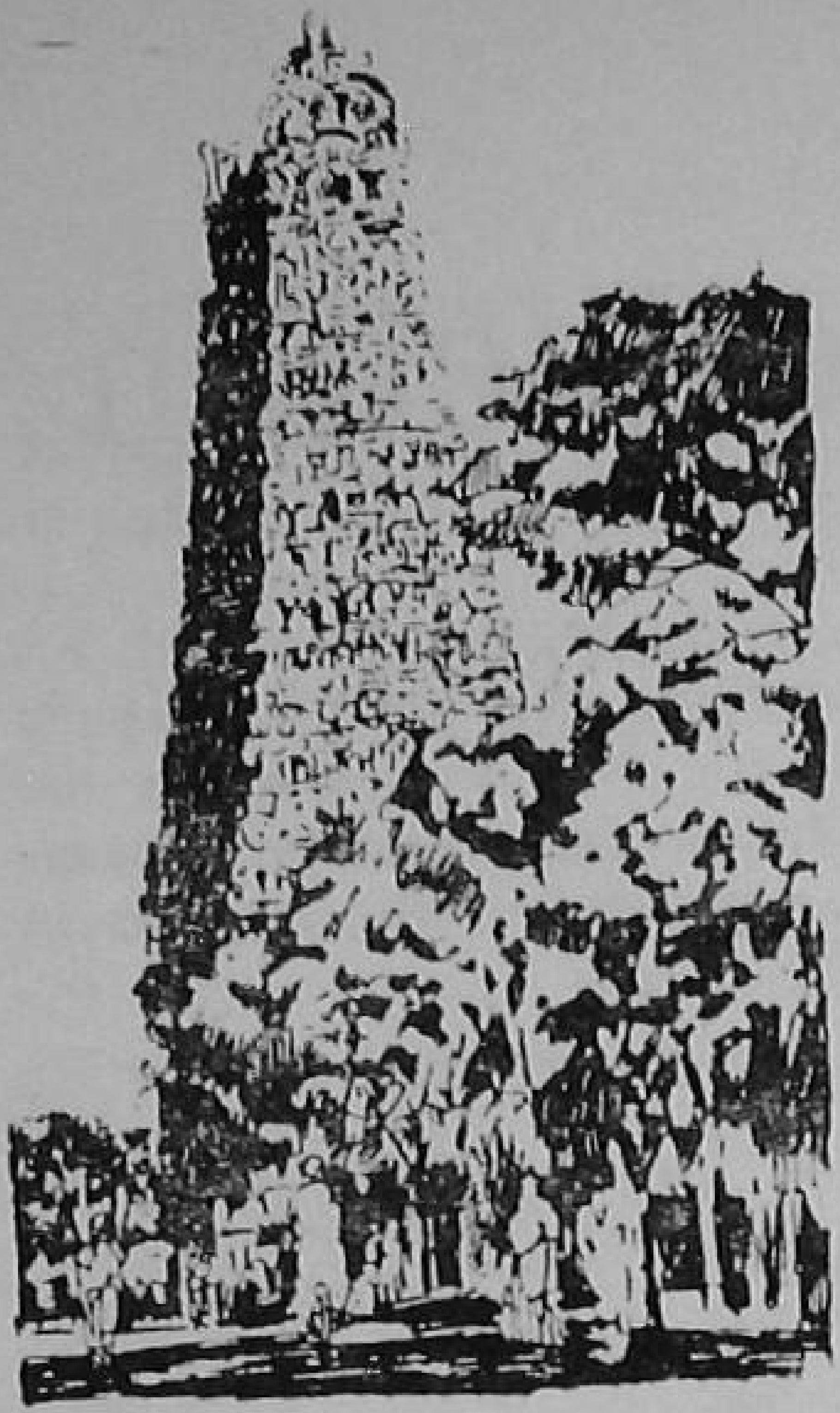
INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS

It is only after all possible works of community benefit have been completed and there is still some saving available in the Defence Labour Bank, that works of individual benefit should be taken up. Here again preference should be given to the work of those beneficiaries whose own (including family) labour is not sufficient for the task and who are too poor to pay for hired labour except on a deferred payment basis. It would be better to assign a specific number of farmers to each member of the Task Force. The number should be manageable, not more than 10 farming families in any case.

Similarly, a certain target should be given to each member of the Force for enrolment of members to the co-operative. There are certain operations which can be taken up in the form of a mass drive or campaign, for instance, digging of compost pits, sowing of green manures, construction and repair of field channels. Proper atmosphere for undertaking these campaigns can be built up by members of the Task Force. Time of the campaign having been determined by the Panchayat, they could persuade their own allotted cultivators to take up the work simultaneously.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

All this will naturally require a great deal of persistance and persuation on the part of the members of the Force. This also presupposes that every member will himself follow the improved agricultural practices. He should also be ready to assist his fellow cultivators. He will, in fact, have to be a progressive farmer and an extension worker in the real sense of the terms—both by practice and precept. Having said all this, the measure of success of the task Force will ultimately depend on the extent to which the parent body, *i.e.*, the Panchayat, is able to plan out the village agricultural production in all its details, aspects and operations and on the clarity with which it is able to guide the Force. For the arm can do no better than the head that commands it. No doubt, for efficacy of planning, a few Gram Sahayaks who are members of the Task Force may also be nominated to the Agricultural Production Committee of the Panchayat for the preparation of the village agricultural production plan.



The Divine Lash

S. SOUNDARAM

In the itinerary of a tour in the South, the Meenakshi temple at Madurai, with its sky-scraping towers is a 'must' for all lovers of art and culture if not religion. As the train steams in towards the junction, it crosses the river Vaigai on whose Southern bank near the railway bridge, stands a lush-green coconut tope whose stems bend to enable the leaves to kiss the waters below. Here in the month of 'Sravan' every year, the gods and priests of the Meenakshi temple enact the drama of the 'Divine Lash' to remind the people of their duty.

People from all the five Southernmost districts gather every year to get the scourge on their backs, to be reminded of the divine duty to devote their labour to community effort. The writhing pain from the lash is reflected in a blissful elevation on their faces. They bow to the divine will and get back to do their daily duties the whole year round as ordained by the Supreme.

DIVINE WRATH

Time was when King Arimardhanan was the ruling Pandyan King. He had wronged his minister,—a Tamil saint and so Divine wrath showed itself in unseasonal floods in the swift river Vaigai. Its waters rose high, uprooting trees, and overflowing the paddy fields. The fortress walls tottered and the gushing waters entered the city. The roads became small rivers and the by-lanes rivulets. People were stunned and shocked. Palaces and huts were being levelled down by the deluge. People ran helter-skelter seeking refuge and security.

The king called a council of elders, the ministers and eminent intellectuals of the city to give him advice. It was decided that the banks of the river should be raised quickly. All able-bodied citizens were to lend a helping hand in stemming the tide that threatened their very existence. Each family was required to send at least one man. The message was broadcast by beat of tom-tom throughout the city. The king's officials measured out the work for each family and the work progressed very fast.

Now there lived at the end of the city an old woman by name Vanthi. The officials had marked out her share of work too in the bunding operations. There was no escape from the king's wrath, if she failed to complete the allotted task by the end of the day. But she was too old to carry earth or to do any other manual work. She had no money even to hire labour to do the work for her. Nor had she any kith or kin to oblige her. So she prayed and prayed to the Lord,—the consort of the Fish-eyed Goddess "Meenakshi", to show her the way. She was on the look-out for a coolie who could do the allotted task for her in return for a dish of "puttu",— a delicious sweet-meat made of rice flour and gur, in the making of which she was an adept, and by the sale of which she earned her livelihood.

A COOLIE COMES

Time fleeted by and the day advanced but no one was visible as far as her dim eyes could see. She shuddered to think of the king's wrath at her default. But a true devotee's prayers cannot go waste. There came a coolie along Vanthi's lane, with basket in hand and spade on his shoulder, shouting and selling his labour.

"Coolie!, Oh, Coolie!," the old woman shouted grinning her teeth with joy, "Would you do my share of labour on the bank?" "What wages would you give me for my labour?" he said. "My son, I cannot pay you like the rich in coins. But my delicious 'puttu', I can give to your heart's content," she replied. He agreed to this. Putting down his spade and basket, he said, "Oh, Nanny! Let me have a little 'puttu' first as I am so tired and terribly hungry. I will do your bidding when refreshed with your sweets." So the old woman was delighted and served him the 'puttu'. The coolie relished the sweet and ate it to his heart's content. Thereafter he went to the banks of the river Vaigai, and registered his name as the coolie of Vanthi to do her allotted task. As he dug a little earth, he would lick his lips for the lingering sweetness of 'puttu'. Soon he would rush back to Vanthi to have one more morsel. Instead of doing the hard labour, he would dance, sing, plunge into the river, swim round and gurgle with laughter. Vanthi who had by this time reached the spot, was horrified to see that little progress had been made. She coaxed him with another handful of 'puttu'. The day was soon going to set and Vanthi became frightened as the King and officers came to inspect the work. The breaches were all filled except Vanthi's part. The coolie on the bank was still playing pranks. His body was beautiful, his skin shining and soft. Everyone doubted if his muscles had ever been trained for hard work. May be, he was a musician or a dancer or a spoilt son of a rich man. They doubted the wisdom of the one who employed such a man for this work. So they went to the king to report the matter. The monarch grew furious, when he heard that a man was cheating an old and feeble woman and that he was neglecting his duty. So he along with his ministers came to the river to supervise the work himself. He was astonished to see that the bund had been raised all along except for Vanthi's share. The waters were gushing in the narrow breach, and if the same was not plugged soon that would wash out the good work done by the citizens. He ordered that the coolie should be brought to him. Soon the coolie stood before the King. The latter, snatching a whip from a bystander gave a lash on the defaulter's back. And Lo! In a fleeting second, before the tip of the whip could touch his skin, the coolie had dumped his basket of earth in the gap and had vanished. The lash fell on the king's back. His wives in the palace felt it; his ministers, generals, the princesses, the people, the animals, the birds, the trees, the sun, the moon, and the stars, all quivered with the scourge on their backs. The deep seas, the clouds, the angels in the heavens, the men on the earth, they yelled with the pain of the Divine lash. The bunds were raised on both sides of the river. The gushing waters flowed in harness enriching the fields and the farms.

So this drama is enacted every year, by the priests and the gods in the festival in the coconut tope. The devotees gather to get the lash on their backs, to whip up their conscience to do their duty, by the community and the country.

Let every able-bodied person take a vow on this day of the birth of our Republic to whip up our will to donate labour to community effort in order to stem the deluge, which once again threatens to over-run the holy Himalayas in the North. Those who are old and weak like Vanthi, have also a role to play. They may use their skill in making good meals for the labourers.

NEW FERMENT IN LADAKH HAMLETS

(*Continued from page* 9)

a vow to fight to the last man to clear their sacred soil of the Chinese aggressors. They also made an on-the-spot collection of Rs. 1,000 for the National Defence Fund.

HOUSEWIVES PLAY THEIR ROLE

Busy housewives spare some time to contribute their mite to the national efforts. Collective knitting of socks, cap comforters, gloves and sweaters for the Jawans is a common sight in Leh, today. Young women are taking lessons in First Aid and Home Nursing at the Civil Hospital. Many Ladakhi girls have registered themselves for training in nursing.

POOREST OF THE POOR CONTRIBUTE

Collections in cash and kind continue to pour in. The Head Lama of Ladakh, Shri Bakula, recently completed a tour of the far-flung areas, using all available means of communication,—plane, jeep and pony, and even walking long distances. Wherever he went, even the poorest of the poor had something to offer voluntarily for the national effort. Those who cannot undertake front duty have donated cash, foodgrains, heavy woollens or ponies as a token of their resolve.

ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES OF JAWANS

The dependents of those who have laid down their lives fighting the enemy are taken care of by the entire village community. The Government of Jammu and Kashmir have provided some immediate cash assistance to such families. During his recent tour, the Minister for Ladakh Affairs distributed Rs. 4,500 among such families and also gave them foodgrains.

The call for the preservation of the integrity of India has stirred everyone. The Ladakhi Buddhists and Muslims have held mass prayers in their Gomphas and mosques for speedy victory over the enemy.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN PEACE & IN CRISIS

(*continued from page* 6)

golden opportunity for introspection and the transformation now overdue. For the new give and take between them will have to be prompted and inspired more by the spirit of their association than by any material advantage such an association can confer immediately. From days of antiquity, we have been travelling to the mountains in quest of realisation. We are on a different quest upon the Himalayas this time; but pilgrimage nevertheless. For this alone will decide if the life we prize as a people in India can endure; if we have been followers in thus country of substance or shadow; if the Manzil which it yet not, can indeed be in the making for all her citizens.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

(*Continued from page 2*)

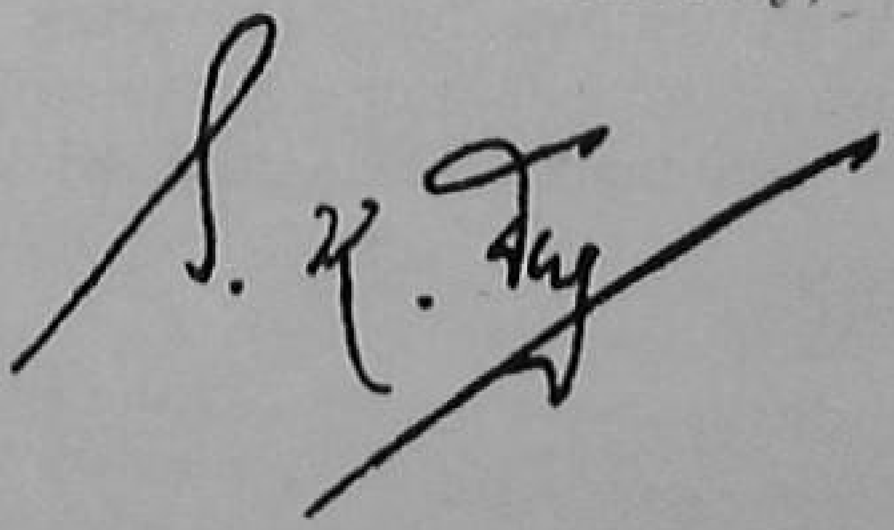
of Community Development in the present crisis. It is the briefest printed document of which I have had the privilege to be the author. It has cost me relatively the heaviest investment of time. I would like you to study this carefully. I am happy I am able to greet you with an altogether new programme which I had anticipated only vaguely a year ago.

Let me now offer you warm and hearty felicitations. The countryside is bursting with enthusiasm and excitement to do its bit in this turning point of history. It is for us, friend, to harness this mighty reservoir, It is for us to show to the world, to posterity how a nation can face a calamity with faith free of fear and rancour. The attorney of the still dumb and mute in the countryside, at last has the task he long awaited. The attorney will be judged by the vested interest he can create for the common man, in the battle for freedom, in which he is being called to stake his all.

With affectionate greetings once again on the merging line of the year,

Jai Hind.

Yours sincerely,



People in the villages as well as towns all over the country are being trained for Civil Defence. In the picture above, the inhabitants of Tezpur are receiving rifle-training.

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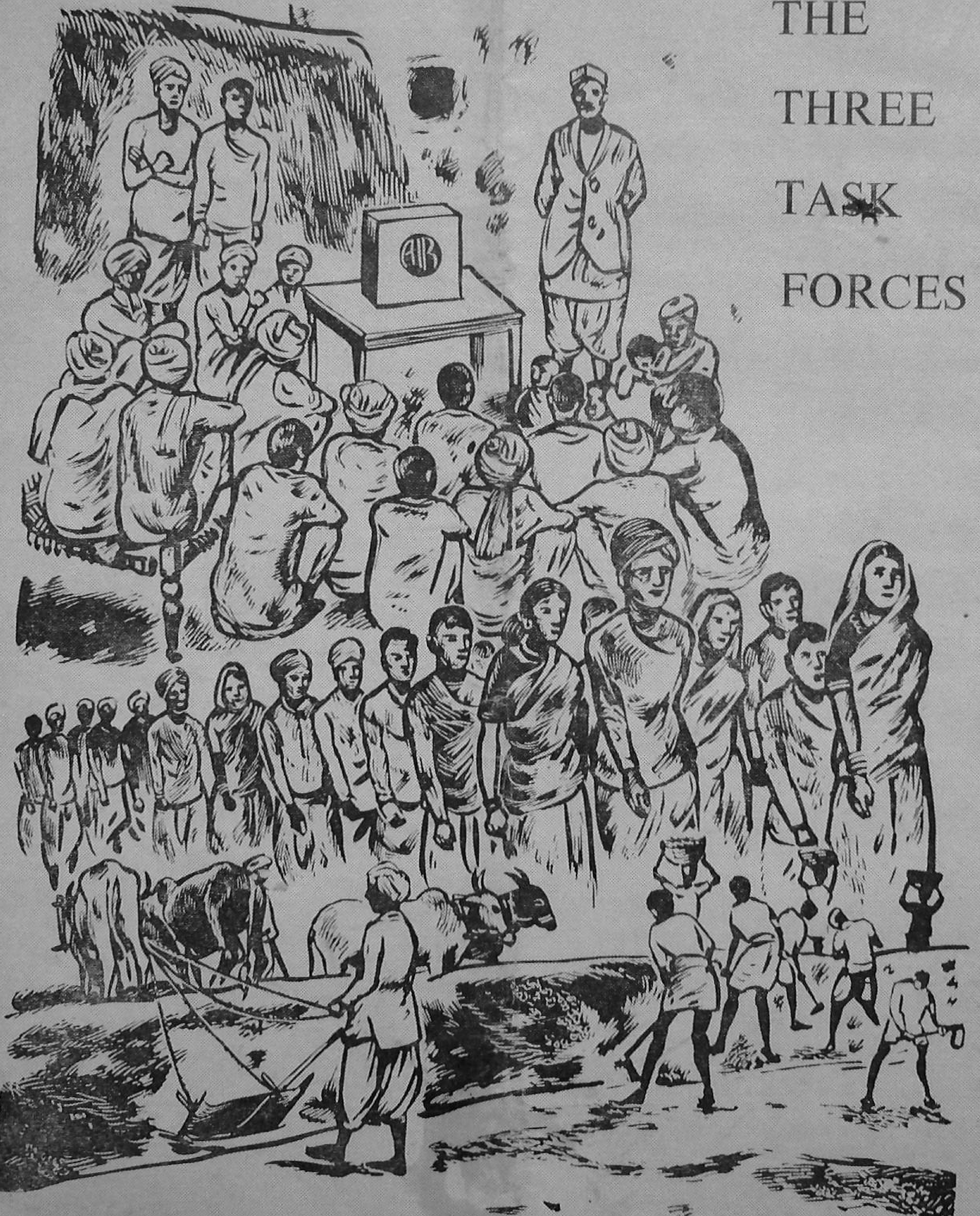
THE THREE TASK FORCES